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more exclusively pastoral, and more nomadic, than at the present time, and that the dwindling of their herds may partly explain their persistent aggressiveness.

III

Although cattle have many uses they are chiefly useful for the milk they provide. Milk and millet (sorghum) are the staple foods of the Nuer. In some parts of their country, especially among the Lou, the millet supply seldom lasts the whole year, and when it is exhausted people are dependent on milk and fish. At such times a family may be sustained by the milk of a single cow. In all parts the millet crop is uncertain and more or less severe famines are frequent, during which people rely on fish, wild roots, fruits, and seeds, but mainly on the milk of their herds. Even when millet is plentiful it is seldom eaten alone, for without milk, whey, or liquid cheese, Nuer find it stodgy, unpalatable, and, especially for children, indigestible. They regard milk as essential for children, believing that they cannot be well and happy without it, and the needs of children are always the first to be satisfied even if, as happens in times of privation, their elders have to deny themselves. In Nuer eyes the happiest state is that in which a family possesses several lactating cows, for then the children are well-nourished and there is a surplus that can be devoted to cheese-making and to assisting kinsmen and entertaining guests. A household can generally obtain milk for its little children because a kinsman will lend them a lactating cow, or give them part of its milk, if they do not possess one. This kinship obligation is acknowledged by all and is generously fulfilled, because it is recognized that the needs of children are the concern of neighbours and relatives, and not of the parents alone. Occasionally, however, after an epidemic or, to a lesser degree, after two or three years of the group have married, an entire hamlet, or even a whole village may experience scarcity. Sometimes, also, shortage is caused by a tendency for the cows of a village to cease lactating at about the same time.

Nuer value their cows according to the amount of milk they give and they know the merits of each in this respect. The calves of a good milch cow are more highly prized than the

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234 the wir. When the teats become soft and empty the calf is again loosened and the process is repeated. The second milking is called *nip inaic*, the greater *nip*. As a rule there are only two milkings, but if it is a very good milch cow at the height of her lactation period the calf may once more be loosened and a third milking, called *nip inoc*, the lesser *nip*, be taken. When the girl has finished milking she wipes her thighs and the milk-gourd with the cow's tail and loosens the calf to finish off what milk is left. The first milking takes longer time and produces more milk than the second, and the second more than the third. The morning yield is greater than the evening yield.

A series of measurements suggest that four to five pints a day may be regarded as a general average for Nuer cows during their lactation period, which lasts, on an average, about seven months. It must be remembered, however, that this is an estimate of the yield for human consumption. The calf gets its share before, during, and after the milking. It is possible, moreover, that, as Nuer declare, some cows hold up their milk for their calves, since the calves often suck for several minutes after milking before their dams refuse them by kicking them or moving so that they cannot reach their udders. Sometimes a small boy drags the calf away and milks the udders himself, licking the milk off his hands, or shares the teats with the calf, but as a rule the calf gets the remainder of the milk. The total yield may, therefore, be as high as seven to nine pints a day and it appears to be far richer than milk given by English cows. It is not surprising that the yield is small, because Nuer cows receive no artificial feeding, succulent pasturage is often difficult to obtain, and they have to endure great hardship. It must, moreover, be emphasized that whereas English dairy farmers require only milk, Nuer herdsmen require milk and also wish to preserve every calf. Human needs have to be subordinated to the needs of the calves, which are the first consideration if the herd is to be perpetuated.

Milk is consumed in various ways. Fresh milk is drunk, especially by children, and is also consumed with millet-porridge. Fresh milk is chiefly drunk by adults in the heat of the dry season when a refreshing draught is most appreciated and food is scarce. Some milk is put aside, where it soon, very rapidly in hot weather, sours and thickens, in which condition it is relished. Nuer like to have

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a gourd of sour milk always at hand in case visitors come. Part of the daily yield is kept for making cheese, and if there are several cows in lactation one may be reserved for this purpose. Milk for churning is drawn into a different gourd to that used for drinking milk. It is then transferred to a churning gourd (see Fig. 1), in which it stands for several hours, and as churning gourds are not cleaned, unless they smell bad, the acids which remain from the previous churning curdle the milk. After standing it is churned

FIG. 1. Churning gourd.

by a woman, or girl, who sits on the ground with her legs stretched in front of her, and, raising the gourd, brings it down with a jerk on her thighs where she rocks it a few times before repeating her actions: a simple but lengthy way of churning. A small quantity of water is poured into the gourd when the curds are beginning to form to make them set well and to increase the quantity of whey, and some ox's urine may be added to give them consistency. When they have formed, the woman pours the milk into a cup-shaped gourd and scoops them out with a round shell into another gourd vessel which is hung up in a hut. The whey, mixed with fresh milk, is mainly drunk by women and boys. Every day they add to the supply of curds and now and again stir some ox's urine with them to prevent them from going bad. They may add to the supply for several weeks before the final boiling over a quick fire, which

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life. Such a life nurtures the qualities of the shepherd—courage, love of fighting, and contempt of hunger and hardship—rather than shapes the industrious character of the peasant.

IV

Nuer are also interested in their cattle for meat, boiled and roasted. They do not raise herds for slaughter, but sheep and oxen are frequently sacrificed at ceremonies. There are always ghosts and spirits in whose honour a sacrifice would at any time be appropriate, and such sacrifices are generally long overdue, so that there does not lack a proper excuse for a feast when people desire one. Fertile cows are sacrificed in mortuary rites, but, otherwise, only barren females are killed. At sacrifices most people are interested more in the festal than the religious character of the rites. Sometimes, as at marriage ceremonies, the people who perform the ritual are different from those who eat the meat, while at other ceremonies there is a general scramble for the carcass. Desire for meat is shown without shame on these occasions, and Nuer recognise that some men sacrifice without due cause. In some years it is a custom in the rains for young men to join together at a homestead with the purpose of slaughtering oxen and gorging themselves with meat. Except on such occasions, however, people ought not to kill an ox *solely* for food—it being even thought that the ox may curse them—and they only do so in severe famine. The Lou, who are rich in cattle, have a reputation, of which they are rather ashamed, for killing oxen for meat. Nevertheless, nowhere in Nuerland are cattle ordinarily slaughtered for food, and a man would never kill even a sheep or goat merely on the grounds that he desired meat. On occasions of minor importance sheep or goats are sacrificed rather than oxen, as they are less valuable.

Any animal which dies a natural death is eaten. Even when a youth's favourite ox dies he must be persuaded to partake of its flesh, and it is said that were he to refuse his spear might avenge the insult by cutting his foot or hand on some future occasion. Nuer are very fond of meat, and declare that on the death of a cow, 'The eyes and the heart are sad, but the teeth and the stomach are glad.' 'A man's stomach prays to God, independently of his mind, for such gifts.'

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Though oxen are sacrificed and eaten they are not valued only for these purposes, but also for display and for the prestige their possession confers. Colour and shape of horns are significant, but the essential qualities are bigness and fatness, it being considered especially important that the haunch bones should not be apparent. Nuer admire a large hump which wobbles when the animal walks, and to exaggerate this character they often manipulate the hump shortly after birth.

FIG. 2. Gourd for storing cream.

Like other pastoral peoples in East Africa the Nuer extract blood from the necks of their cattle, and this is a supplementary article of diet in dry season camps, where one may generally see at least one cow bled each evening. Cows are bled for culinary purposes more frequently than oxen. The operation, called *lar*, consists of tying a cord tightly round a cow's neck so that the veins stand out and one of them can be stabbed, on the head side of the cord, with a small knife bound with cord or grass to prevent it entering too deeply. The blood spurts out, and when a large gourd has been filled they loosen the cord and it ceases to flow. Some dung is smeared over the wound. If one examines the neck of a cow one sees a row of small cicatrices. Cows appear to be a little giddy after the operation and may totter slightly, but otherwise seem none

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the worse for their experience. Indeed, it may well be, as Nuer assert, that they are the better for it, for they lead a sluggish life. The blood is boiled by women till it is fairly consistent and can be used as a meat flavouring with porridge; or the men let it stand till it coagulates into a solid block, and, after roasting it in the embers of a fire, cut it up and eat it.

Nuer do not regard the blood of cows as a staple article of diet and it does not play an important part in their cuisine. Indeed, they say that they do not perform the operation to acquire food, though they confess that roasted blood is delicious, but for the benefit of the cows. Bleeding is designed to cure a cow of any sickness by letting out the bad blood of the sickness. Also, Nuer say, it makes the cow fat, for next day it will be more lively and graze avidly. Bleeding, moreover, in their opinion, decreases the desire of a cow to be served. Nuer say that if a cow is served too frequently it may eventually become barren, whereas, if it is bled now and again, it will only require to be served once and will be in calf. Cattle are sometimes bled for medical reasons in the rainy season, when people may be so replete that the blood is given to the boys of the kraal and to the dogs. Sometimes they make incisions in the noses of calves and let the blood flow to the ground in order to make them fat. I have seen Nuer scarify their own legs and the small of their backs to induce fortune and strength.

The following two points seem to us to be significant. (1) Whilst Nuer normally do not kill their stock for food, the end of every beast is, in fact, the pot, so that they obtain sufficient meat to satisfy their craving and have no pressing need to hunt wild animals, an activity in which they engage little. (2) Except when epidemics are rife the usual occasions of eating meat are ritual and it is the festal character of rites which gives them much of their significance in the life of the people.

V

Apart from milk, meat, and blood, cattle furnish Nuer with numerous household necessities, and when we consider how few are their possessions we can appreciate the importance of cattle as raw material. The bodies and bodily products of cattle have the following uses:

Their skins are used for beds, trays, for carrying fuel (Plate XVIII), and for tethering and other purposes, hides (Fig. 19), leather collars for oxen (Fig. 4), and for the tympana of drums. They are employed in the manufacture of pipes, spears, shields,

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therefore, are an indispensable article of food, and the pursuit of them influences seasonal movements.

The rivers teem with fish of many edible species which greatly supplement the diet of the Nuer in the dry season and enable them to survive years in which the crops fail or there are epidemics among the herds. In choosing camp sites opportunities for fishing are considered no less than water and pasturage. Nevertheless, Nuer do not regard themselves as a water-people, and despise people like the Shilluk who, they say, live mainly by fishing and hunting hippopotami. In spite of this suggestion of superiority Nuer enjoy fishing and the feeling of well-being a full fish diet gives them. One may judge how great their catch must be at the height of the dry season from the fact that one can see along the Baro and Sobat cattleless fishing camps (kal) in which, except for a little grain, goat's milk, and an occasional wild beast, people live on fish alone for several weeks. These are poor people who either have no cattle or have one or two cows which they have placed in the care of richer relatives, for no Nuer would live without his cattle if he could help it, and they are despised as persons of Anuak or Bulak Dinka descent. Some Nuer tribes fish more than others, according to their opportunities. Thus Lou country has poor fishing compared with Eastern Jikany which has a network of waterways. Tribes and tribal sections jealously guard their fishing rights, and people who want to fish extensively in a pool must first obtain permission from its owners if they do not want to provoke fighting.

It is the seasonal flooding, due to the rise and fall of the rivers and the flatness of the country, that allows Nuer to kill fish in such large numbers, for they are carried out of the rivers, where they are little accessible to the simple methods of Nuer fishing, into streams and lagoons where they are more vulnerable. The best months are November and December, when the rivers begin to fall and to drain streams and lagoons, which can be dammed at suitable points and the fish speared in their efforts to break downstream. Fishing from dams is conducted mainly at night, fires being lighted behind the fishers, who fix their attention on a line of withies placed upstream from the dam and hurl their spears at whatever point of the line fish reveal

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commencement of the rains, in April and May, when the rivers begin to rise again and bring the fish into the shallows where they are easily speared among the reeds and weeds. There is very little fishing—by spear in occasional lagoons—after the Nuer have returned to their villages, for these are mainly inland, away from open water, and the streams are too deep and too infested with crocodiles to encourage fishing. Also, the fish are widely distributed by flood water and protected by rank marsh vegetation. Those Nuer whose villages are on the banks of large rivers sometimes fish from dug-out canoes (Plate IX) with long harpoons, but the Nuer possess very few good canoes —and these they have exchanged or stolen from the Anuak—for they have neither the wood nor the skill to make more than crudely burnt-out vessels of palm and sycamore.

Nuer are fine spearsmen but, otherwise, not very ingenious fishermen. Except for occasional fish spitted with amazing rapidity from the bows of canoes by harpoons and spears as they jump or rise to the surface, Nuer never see their prey, but either hurl their spears at random into likely spots amid weeds and reeds or set up grasses and withies to indicate the presence of fish. A myth recounts that once upon a time all fish were visible to the human eye but that God later made them invisible in the water. The chief Nuer weapon is the barbed spear, though the harpoon is considerably used. When fishing in shallows with spears they sometimes strike the water with a ball of twine or the shell of a giant snail attached to a stick (Fig. 10) to attract the fish. Fish are eaten roasted or boiled.

VI

Nuerland is also very rich in game, though Nuer do not exploit this source of food extensively. There are vast herds of tiang and cob; other antelopes are plentiful; and buffalo, elephant, and hippopotami abound. Nuer eat all animals except carnivora, monkeys, some of the smaller rodents, and zebra, and they kill the last for its skin and tail in the south of Lou country, where it roams in the dry season. Lions abound, especially to the west of the Nile, and are a serious menace to the herds, but Nuer only kill them and leopards, the skins of which are worn by chiefs, if they attack cattle in kraals or grazing grounds, as

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frequently happens, especially in the early dry season. They seldom go out to hunt game animals, except gazelle and giraffe, and only pursue those that approach their camps. Indeed, they cannot be considered keen hunters and may even be said to treat the sport with a measure of condescension, holding that only absence of cattle makes a man engage in it other than casually. Their flocks and herds provide them with meat, and this fact probably accounts in part for their lack of interest in hunting, which is, however, also to be related to the nature of their country, for its open plains offer little opportunity for successful hunting with the spear.

Nuer refuse all reptiles, except the crocodile and the tortoise. Ostriches, bustards, francolin and guinea-fowl, geese, duck, teal, and other waterfowl, abound, but Nuer consider it shameful for adults to eat them and, except in very severe famines it is probable that only children, poor cattleless men, and an occasional elderly person, eat them, and then rarely and secretly in the bush. They do not keep domesticated fowls and show particular repugnance to the idea of eating them. Likewise eggs are not eaten. No insects are eaten, but the honey of wild bees is collected after the firing of the grasses in December and January and is either eaten in the bush or with porridge at home.

The only tribe who possess more than an odd gun or two are the Eastern Gaajak, who obtain them from Ethiopia. Nuer hunt with dogs and the spear, and rely on their fleetness, endurance, and courage. Hunting in the rains is therefore impossible, because not only does rank vegetation impede pursuit but also animals can choose their ground, there being everywhere sufficient water and grazing. At the height of the dry season they are forced to drink at the same pools, lagoons, and river inlets as men, and the dry bare country allows open chase, for except in tracking giraffe, Nuer hunt by sight and not by spoor. It is only gazelles, which are worried by dogs, and buffaloes, which prefer attack to flight, that can be tackled by one or two men. Other animals, such as tiang, oribi, and buck, are only killed when they approach a camp and can be cut off by a large number of young men. I saw several animals killed on the foibat by being surrounded on the landward side and driven into

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VII

In most years wild fruits, seeds, and roots are not an important item in Nuer diet. Their country is mainly treeless and fruits therefore few; only 'wild dates' (*Balanites aegyptiaca*), found in occasional patches to the west of the Nile and in more extensive stretches to the east, provide much sustenance. The fruits ripen from about January to March and both the kernels and their sweet fleshy covering are eaten. A number of other fruits are eaten, mainly by children. Initiated youths refuse most of them. The seeds and roots of water-lilies (*Nymphaea lotus*), which are found in pools and lagoons in the early dry season are much relished. The seeds of 'wild rice' (*Oryza Barthii*) are collected and a number of wild plants that grow on village sites are used as seasoning for porridge. In famine years much greater attention is paid to the wild harvest. 'Wild dates' are then a great stand-by and people eat a wide range of fruits, ripening mainly in the early part of the drought, which they neglect when hunger is not severe, and make use of bush-yams and the seeds of wild sorghum and other grasses.

VIII

It will have been noted that fishing, hunting, and collecting are dry-season occupations and produce during that season the necessary supplement to an insufficient milk diet. In the wet season, when these activities are no longer profitable and the milk yield tends to fall off, the heavy rains, which cause the changes responsible for these losses in supply, produce conditions suitable for horticulture, impossible in the drought, that will replace them. The variation in food-supply throughout the year and its sufficiency for life at all seasons is thus determined by the annual cycle of ecological changes. Without grain in the wet season Nuer would be in a parlous state; and since it can be stored they can, also, to a small extent, make provision against famine in the drought.

Climatic conditions together with flooding and the flatness of the country make it impossible to cultivate most Central African food plants in Nuerland, and the Nuer are especially unfortunate in having no root crop as a reserve in famine years.

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241 after year till it is utterly exhausted, when they change their homestead site, often moving for some years to a new village. Nevertheless, they know that each year of tillage means further deterioration and judge the impoverishment of the soil by the size of the millet plants and of their yield and by the presence of certain weeds which only flourish on exhausted ground. A garden is cultivated annually for from five to ten years and after it has been left fallow for a few seasons it is tested to see whether the soil is still hard and caked, or loose, soft, and ready to bear a new crop. In gardens cultivated in bush sites away from the villages, on the other hand, people are not confined by the gardens of their neighbours, and it is possible to hoe a virgin piece of ground each year at one end and to abandon an exhausted piece at the other end.

241 Nuer gardens are very small. Measurements do not give so clear an idea of their size as noting that in an average year the ● 262 people in most parts of Nuerland have just enough grain to last them till the following harvest, if they are very economical during the dry season and subsist mainly on milk and fish, while in a bad year they may have to go without porridge for [151] several weeks. Also it may be noted that Nuer do not build granaries, but find small grass and earthenware bins, kept in their huts, sufficient for storage. However, we may judge how important millet is to them lets by its quantity than by its place in their total food-supply, for it is not merely a subsidiary item of diet of high nutritive value but is an essential food, since they would be hard pressed to maintain life without it. Nuer fully acknowledge that this is so and in no way despise horticulture, but are, on the whole, industrious gardeners.

241 Nevertheless, they consider that horticulture is an unfortunate necessity involving hard and unpleasant labour and not an ideal occupation, and they tend to act on the conviction that the larger the herd the smaller need be the garden. They are herdsmen and not peasants. When I have drawn attention to badly kept gardens or remarked that the crops received no protection from beasts and birds they have been unperturbed, for, while it would be disgraceful to neglect cattle, there are no strong feelings about inattention to gardens. When I have asked them why they do not sow more millet I have

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often received some such reply as: 'Oh well, such is our custom. We have cattle.'

I wish to emphasize, in conclusion, the following points: (1) that Nuer cultivate only enough grain for it to be one element in their food-supply and not enough to live on it alone; (2) that with their present climate and technology considerable increase in horticulture would be unprofitable; and (3) that the dominance of the pastoral value over horticultural interests is in accord with oecological relations which favour cattle husbandry at the expense of horticulture. Nuer values and oecological relations, therefore, combine to maintain the bias towards cattle husbandry, in spite of rinderpest having rendered it a more precarious occupation than hitherto.

IX

It has been mentioned that Nuer must have a mixed economy in the given oecological relations because no one source of food is sufficient to keep them alive, and that the dominant food-producing activity at each season is determined by the oecological cycle. The different elements of diet, therefore, have an oecologically determined relation to one another and these relations can be roughly plotted.

Milk foods, millet in the form of porridge and beer, a little maize, fish, and meat, are the main items of Nuer diet. Milk is a staple food all the year round, though cows probably tend to give a smaller yield towards the end of the rains owing to insufficiency of pasturage, and it is said that there is a tendency for them to calve in numbers after the first harvest and therefore to cease lactating a few weeks earlier—if this is correct it is possibly due to the hot weather in February and March bringing the cows on heat. This seasonal tendency and the respective contributions of cattle and millet to Nuer food-supply are brought out in a story in which Cow and Millet have a dispute. Cow says that Millet is a person of no importance and that it is her milk that keeps people alive throughout the year, while in time of famine they can eat her flesh and live. Millet replies that Cow's claims are doubtless just, but that when she is ripe the children are glad, for they chew the sweet stems and rub out the grain between their hands and eat it,

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and there is plenty of porridge and beer. Cow argues that anyhow porridge without milk is unpalatable and that her milk will be finished by the time Millet is ripe. It is difficult to confirm these variations in the yield of milk or to estimate their importance, but the tendency for it to rise slightly in the dry season is indicated in the chart opposite.

Millet is consumed as porridge and beer in large quantities in the months between the first harvest and departure for dry-season camps. If the harvest has been good people like to eat their daily porridge in camps, and when the camp grain-supply runs short women journey to the villages to replenish it. When camps break up and people return to their villages millet consumption increases, beer being again brewed, and in a good year there is sufficient to satisfy requirements till the new harvest is ripe. In a normal year Nuer can just tide over these months if they are economical and have been careful not to use much grain in camp. Only in the most favoured parts of the country are they assured of an adequate supply throughout the year. In most parts there is always a very narrow margin between sufficiency and want, and in a bad year starvation is not infrequent. If the crops fail people survive on milk, fish, and wild fruits, and in extremity may kill some of their beasts. Rinderpest is considered a worse calamity. When rinderpest and failure of crops occur in the same year people expect the older age-sets to be wiped out. Much suffering may be caused by excessive drought or flood, which injure both crops and grazing.

There are good and bad fishing years. Generally, over the greater part of the country, consumption of fish is very low, or entirely absent, at the height of the rains. It rises rapidly to a peak at the commencement of the dry weather, and after descending from this point of great abundance remains fairly constant through the drought, rising again in the early rains. Meat of domesticated stock is mainly eaten after harvest when sacrifices and feasts take place. Cattle are seldom slaughtered in the dry season and, in my experience, Nuer do not kill many wild animals, so that consumption of meat is very low at this time of year, though the deficiency is to some extent made up by bleeding the cows and, in rinderpest years, by eating the carcasses of its victims. On the whole the curve of meat con-

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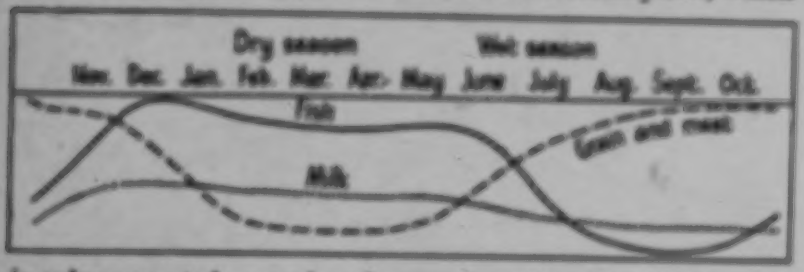
sumption follows that of grain consumption. We need not consider consumption of bush products in a normal year, though it may be kept in mind that they are very useful in famine years, chiefly from January to April.

It will be seen from this chart of relative consumption, which



is only presented as a virtual approximation, that fish largely takes the place of grain and meat as the principal food from January to June and that the time when there is most likely to be a shortage of milk and when few, or no, fish are caught is that when there is plenty of porridge and beer. 'The hungry months', as the Nuer call them, are from May to August when the supply of fish quickly diminishes and maise and millet are still ripening. The months of plenty are from September to the middle of December, when there is abundant millet, and generally much meat, while the end of this period is the best time for fishing. Nuer say that they put on flesh in the rains and lose it in the drought. We may conclude, I think, that even in normal years Nuer do not receive as much nourishment as they require. Their diet is well-balanced, but there is not enough of it at some seasons and there is no surplus to fall back on in the all-too-frequent years of scarcity. Much of Nuer custom and thought is to be attributed to this insufficiency of food. It is wistfully related in one of their stories how once upon a time Man's stomach led an independent life in the bush and lived on small insects roasted by the firing of the grasses, for 'Man was not created with a stomach. It was created apart from him.' One day Man was walking in the bush and came across Stomach there and put it in its present place that it might feed there. Although when it lived by itself it was satisfied with tiny morsels of food, it is now always hungry. No matter how much it eats it is soon craving for more.

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throughout that period. This area is known as the *naic*,[1] and is of value for reasons other than pasture, for the pools and lagoons are full of fish which provide an important item of diet at that time of the year. These conditions determine the seasonal migrations of the Nuer in search of pasture for their cattle, cultivation, and other activities which are part of their economy.

Physical conditions varying from thick bush country, sandy ridges, open grasslands stretching mile after mile with scarcely a tree to break the horizon, to marshland and papyrus swamp, are found in all parts of Nuerland. In the Zeraf Valley, a few miles west of that river, there is a long and almost continuous ridge where the Lak, Thiang, and a few of the Gaawar have their permanent villages. The banks of the Zeraf are high and well defined in its lower reaches, and in some places villages are built close to the river's edge, but to the west the country falls away into swampier ground until it reaches the papyrus swamps of the Bahr el Jebel. A large proportion of Lak country and part of Thiang is covered with acacia bush, land which provides only poor grazing and an abundance of biting flies such as the striped tabanids [136] with are the agent through which direct infection of trypanosomiasis is conveyed. For this reason Lak country is considered poor for cattle. The area on the east bank of the Zeraf is occupied by the majority of the Gaawar and is much less densely populated. High ground is more limited and dispersed, and the people have to contend with serious floods in their permanent settlements, but such conditions produce more plentiful grazing. In the east is the Duk Ridge, a series of sandy outcrops running parallel to the river about forty miles inland. This area was densely populated in Dinka times and in the early stages of the Nuer invasion, and it remains a refuge for the Gaawar in times of heavy flood. In the exceptional [131] floods of 1917–18, which the Nuer refer to as *pilual*, the Duk ridge was packed with refugees fleeing from the rising waters.

The country occupied by the Lou Nuer has all the characteristics [133] of Gaawar country, though the better drained land on which they [166] build their villages is more concentrated, and there is no perennial river running through it. A few of the Lou move to the Sobat River during the dry season and many to the country bordering the Pibor River, but the rest remain along the *naics* left on the edges of the khor Fullus and its tributaries. Those who move eastwards have been something of a problem to the Administration in recent years, for there is a tendency to settle permanently in Anuak country and sometimes over the border in Abyssinia. The cause of this movement is presumably increasing population in man and cattle and the desire

[1] This word has no more precise meaning than 'marshland' in English, and is often used very loosely to describe any area which provides pasture during the dry months of the year.

9:Evans-Pritchard E-9 (1931, 1936;1936 F 212 Nuer F 212

881 '784 and only those women who are nursing babies or who have reached the menopause are allowed near their hut. One or two men, often a youth who was initiated the year before, and who abstain from sexual relations for the time, will keep guard over the boys to prevent their heads from falling sideways, so that the grass circle which they use as a pillow sticks to their temples and in the effort to get it loose the wounds are re-opened. They must sleep on their backs with the backs of their heads on the grass pillows. An old woman may also sleep in the hut and assist in looking after the boys. Should the wounds break open and bleeding be renewed the place is cauterized with a *nyi* which has been heated in the fire.

[157] Until they are taken to the river and cleansed at the end of their seclusion the boys must strictly avoid any contact with the cattle. This is a ritual prohibition, a *bith*, which involves a curse if it is infringed. Not only are they prohibited from going among the cattle but they must even avoid treading on cattle dung. It is said that if a cow approaches them the boys must immediately run away into the shelter of their hut. It is believed that a breach of this prohibition would prevent the formation of regular scars (*thar*) on the forehead so that all the marks of initiation, the pride of manhood, would be obliterated with the exception of the one child, the cut just above the eyebrows. In this connection Miss Huffman records of an initiate that, "When one asks him if his wounds are healed he will always say 'not yet,' but one may find out if they are really healed by asking him if he has gone among the cattle. If not, the wounds are still sore, but if he has been with the cattle it means that the wounds are well healed although the boy will not say so for fear someone with the evil eye should hear of it."[1]

881 •262 During their convalescence the boys are given food in liberal quantities and are probably better fed then at any other time in their lives. Considering that the Nuer is always hungry and frequently starving this abundance of food makes an impression that it is hard for us to appreciate fully. When speaking of their experiences at this period one finds that the lasted nature of their convalescence is frequently stressed. They say that if any youth who has not been freshly initiated looks longingly at their food the initiates will belabour him while if it were an older man they would not strike him but neither would they invite him to partake of the meal. The boys share and share alike, as befits comrades, in any food

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 32.

9.Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1936 F 222 Nuer F 222

that is brought to them. One mother will cook for them in the morning and another in the afternoon and they will take it in turns to provide their sons with food, but what each brings is shared by all and not eaten by her own alone. The mothers themselves bring the food to the hut in which the boys are confined unless they have *diar*, are ritually unclean. If one mother has much milk from the cows of her homestead she will bring it to the boys, while if another cannot procure milk she will make up for her poverty in this respect by supplying plenty of corn for their meals. During the period of their seclusion the boys are restricted to soft food that can be easily swallowed, such as milk and flour paste, but a soft corn mush and even soft and finely chopped meat (*wuig wa kuchar*) is allowed them in Lou and Jokany countries. These eatables do not require mastication, a muscular exertion that might cause the veins to break again. Father Crazzolara writes of the West Bank Nuer that the boys are confined for two months and that for the first fortnight no food other than milk and milk mixed with flour is allowed to them.[1] I do not think that this is the case among the Lou and Jokany tribes where the boys eat porridge and soft meat at the commencement of their seclusion and where the period of confinement to their hut does not last for more than a week to a fortnight. During this time they may not wash their faces. After about a week they are allowed to sit up but must remain quietly in a single sitting position. After a few more days they are considered to be healed even though their wounds have not yet closed. Not all the boys heal at the same time: some are healed at the end of a fortnight while others only after a couple of months. When they are allowed to come out of their hut they sit by the door in the evenings and anoint their foreheads with oil and clay with them oiled. They wake before dawn and wash their foreheads with warm water and then one of the men who is looking after them cleans out clotted blood from the cuts. They then sit and shiver in front of their hut while the cold north wind blows into the wounds and causes them to cicatrize.

Apparently it is between the time when they are well enough to leave the hut and the day on which they are ritually cleansed by bathing in a river that they are considered to enter into a period of mildly prescribed license. They still avoid contact with the cattle and spend their time wandering about in bands in neighbouring gardens and bush. In Lak country at this time they wear a special cord, called *kwak*, around their

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 132. "Mit der Milch wird allmählich etwas Mehl vermischt und so einem [illegible]; dieser Brei und Milch sind für sie zwei Wochen ihre einzige Kost. [illegible] und allmählich gute fein gekochten Fleisch Mus später dazu bekommen."

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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231 turn into a 'Lat' (a combination of ogre and cannibal which
[718] figures largely in folk-lore tales. Nuer firmly believe in these Lats and fear them).

Nuer, be they men, women, or children love their cattle; they are the pride of the tribe. The people delight in being among them. When a boy has his tribal marks
[551] cut, he assumes an ox name in addition to his own.

[325] The cattle are always supposed to see the new moon one night before the people see it.

If a cow is sick, she is well cared for. Everything possible is done for her so far as the Nuer's knowledge goes. A wasps' nest is soaked in water and the mixture forcibly administered to the cow as a preventive against a certain fever.

A bunch of a certain kind of leaves tied about a cow's neck is supposed to help her if all is not right with her when she has just calved.

Muzzles made out of thorns are fastened on the mouth of a calf when they wish to prevent it from sucking.

The Nuer also have sheep, and numerous dogs may be seen.

• [242] During the fishing season when many go to the fishing camps, the Nuer depends upon fish and milk for his food. The cattle are always taken to the fishing camp—for grazing is usually good—hence the milk supply.

THE FISHING SEASON

226 When the dry season is on, the river falls fast and the
221 Nuer is eager to fish. The rivers are full of fish, great big ones, including the Nile perch and several other large white fish which are specially desired for food. In December and January Nuer with their cattle move from the villages to the fishing camps. They build (Fig. 6)
[302] bee-hive-shaped houses—even the walls are of grass.

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The women and children sleep in these; the men sleep in the byres, if there are any, or among the cattle. 226 231

People under one chief spend the fishing season at the same fishing camp. Old people sometimes remain in the villages, but the younger ones enjoy the companionship of others and the change from the routine village life. It serves the same purpose as our summer trip.

While at the camp, fish are caught by spearing them with a special spear or by a hook and line left out all night as a trout line is sometimes left, or by the use of a fishing net, if any one is fortunate enough to possess one. 226

Later on, when the river is lower, fish traps are made by placing sticks close together in the river. When fish get into this enclosure they are unable to find the exit and are speared and taken. Nuer sometimes imitate the sound of fish by making a splashing noise in the water with a stick. Other fish gather, as they think, to where their fellows are, and are speared.

If many fish are caught they are dried and taken back [251] to the village for later use, or possibly they are sent back at once to those who have stayed behind. Sometimes fish are not plentiful and then return trips have to be made to the villages to get durra for food.

When the river begins to rise, fishing in the swamps may be continued for a little while. But soon all return to their villages, for as soon as the rains start, hoeing must be done and durra planted. Also, should their permanent village be across the river from the fishing camp, they must take their cattle over the river before it rises so much that the cattle are unable to swim it in safety. 224 221

THE FOOD-SUPPLY

The Nuer food-supply is frequently limited in quantity; it is also limited in variety. The foods the Nuer will eat 262

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262 are dura, corn, mutton, beef, the flesh of some wild animals—antelope, gazelle, waterbuck—guinea fowl, fish, crocodile—which is considered a choice food—beans, milk, and sometimes greens. This does not mean that these foods are constantly at hand. The average diet of a Nuer consists of dura, fish, milk, and occasionally meat. This limitation of diet works the greatest hardship for little children and the sick and aged.

A Nuer seldom kills a cow unless one has to be offered as a sacrifice. Sheep are not often primarily killed for food. Wild animals are not often available for they usually must be killed with a gun—and who has a gun? Even guinea fowl are not easily caught.

A Nuer will, generally speaking, not eat wild duck. Eggs are not eaten by men as they are considered effeminate. Milk is likewise not regarded as food for men, but women and children and sick men may drink it. Women refuse [341] to drink milk during their menstrual periods.

243 The staple article of food is dura, or kaffir corn as we call it. The dura is planted in May, providing the early rains have begun. If the rainy season is late the planting is delayed until the ground has been softened by several rains so that hoeing is possible. Small hand-hoes are used. Everybody hoes—men, women, and children each do their part in getting the field ready to be planted. The seed dura, which has been kept over from the past year, is sown. It requires to be hoed several times during the season, for the frequent rains make weeds grow as well as dura. In late September or early October, according to the time of planting, the dura is ready to be cut.

[791] When harvest time approaches a 'guk kwoth' or 'prophet of god' is consulted as to when they may cut their dura, and his advice is heeded.

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Every one helps in the work of the harvest, for the 249
stalks must be cut down and the heads cut off and placed
upon a rack which has been placed in the yard for that
purpose. The grains of dura are pounded out, then it [422]
becomes the property of the housewife after the seed dura
has been selected and stored for the coming year.

The stalks of dura are often kept for fuel or for making [372]
fences.

If the rainy season has started early there may be a
second crop of dura, but this seldom happens.

The wife must pound the dura and sift it to get the 252
bran out. She pounds it in a hole in the ground which she
has plastered with mud, using a long pole. She usually
chants a song as she pounds, the thud of the pounding
serving as a low accompaniment to her song.

The dura is cooked like mush and forms the main part
of the food of a Nuer. He eats it without salt or sugar;
sometimes he has a little milk on it. Or the dura may be
soaked and then allowed to sour a little, and then cooked,
in order to give the family a little variety in their
meals.

Corn is also eaten, usually being parched. They also 262
chew the dura stalk or the sugar-cane stalk (if they have
it) for the sugar they find in them.

Some wild tubers are eaten, and some kinds of wild
greens. Beans are also eaten, but I know of no Nuer who
plants them in his own village. Men consider these wild
greens effeminate and will not eat them except in times of
famine. Sometimes in times of famine they gather certain [264]
wild grass seeds and cook them as a food.

The Nuer is not inclined to plant any large field and 262
thus be assured of a surplus of food. The Arab merchant 437
comes to his village when the dura is threshed and shows
such an array of beads and cloths that the Nuer is tempted

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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062 to part with some of his dura. So want is never far from
977 the door of the Nuer home.

333 A drink—more or less intoxicating, according to the amount one drinks of it—is made from dura. Nuer are very fond of it. They frequently get intoxicated enough to fight when they have had their fill of it.

THE NUER IN BUSINESS

247 Few Nuer men engage in any business that helps others. Practically every Nuer man has a plot of ground where he may raise the family's supply of dura, but he seldom thinks of raising any to sell.

The Government has tried to interest the Nuer in raising cotton, but with no marked success so far.

326 A few men are blacksmiths and make the spears, fishing spears, and ornaments out of iron, brass, or wire. They sharpen old hoes, spears and such like, and make good money in this line. The equipment a blacksmith requires is decidedly meagre. A piece of iron to hammer on, a piece of iron to hammer with, and a fire, constitute the usual equipment, although one occasionally sees a chisel.

342 Some men make a reputation for themselves by their skill as roofers. The roof of a Nuer house when new is a very pretty piece of work, being quite smooth and even. It takes a good roofer to fix a roof so that the heavy tropical rains do not go through it. Men roof the houses, but the making of the long grass eaves to protect the wall from rain is considered as women's work and is left for them to do.

323 Women sometimes make earthen pots and sell or
432 trade them to others who are not so well versed in this art, but practically all women are more or less proficient in pottery.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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If there are cattle to be milked, the woman must milk them morning and evening. In the afternoon she must again go to the river to refill the water-jar. She usually stops to bathe if she comes from any distance. 572 [594]

Sometimes this work of getting the water-jars filled twice a day is not as merely routine as it sounds; it may be fraught with danger in this crocodile infested river. One afternoon about five o'clock, a huge crocodile was seen sunning itself on the river bank right in the path down which the women would come to get water between five and six o'clock. 000

The bank was steep, no one could possibly see the crocodile until he started down the slope. Then it would be practically impossible to get away until too late, because the woman would be burdened with her heavy water-jar, and that, together with the steep bank and her surprise at finding the crocodile there, would retard her escape.

But a missionary was passing in the launch and saw the crocodile. He realized its purpose, but not in time to shoot as he went by. But the launch quickly circled around again and slowly approached the path where the crocodile lay awaiting its prey. He shot the top of its head off; it gave one shudder and then never moved from its place. The Nuer in the launch wanted the meat, for crocodile tail in their estimation makes delicious steak. [642] But one of the women missionaries in the launch objected seriously when the men wanted to cut off the crocodile's tail. She wanted to be sure it was dead, so that there would be no possible chance of any objections from the crocodile to the tail-amputation affair. The men did not seem to feel that a crocodile with the top of its head blown off would have much power to object to anything that might be done to it. But to appease feminine fears

March - April. When the rains begin the old people return to the village for sowing.

June. The rest of the people follow with the cattle. The move from camp to village is direct, whereas in the move from village to camp there is an intervening period of wandering.

The Nuer year is therefore divided into two parts, consisting of a period in the villages and a period in the camp. This annual transhumance is necessary for the very existence of the Nuer. Hunterpast pursuits complete dependence on cattle, so that they must have villages on highlands, with gardens, in order to grow the necessary supplies of grain. Climatic conditions prevent complete reliance on cultivation and the need of fresh pastures and water for the cattle forces them into dry-season camps near permanent supplies.

Homesteads may be strung out along sandy ridges with gardens at the back and growing in front and the location and size of the villages depend on the distribution and extent of the higher ground suitable for cultivation. The direction of the dry-season movements are determined by ecological conditions. Transhumance enhances the importance of white latger than the villages which, for economic reasons, cannot easily maintain a self-sufficient isolation as do the Jikiliak, Jagei, Athoic and Lango villages where the emphasis is on cultivation.

ECONOMY

The economic importance of cattle to the Nuer

Economically, cattle are chiefly important for milk and milk products, such as whey and liquid cheese. We are told that the Nuer value their cows according to the amount of milk they give.

Nuer eat meat boiled and roasted but, although they are particularly fond of it, they do not raise cattle for slaughter. It is considered that people ought not to kill cattle solely for food and, except on sacrificial and special occasions with a ritual aspect, the Nuer refrain from doing so. It is even thought that animals killed specifically for food might curse their owners.

Like other pastoral peoples in East Africa, the Nuer extract blood from the necks of their cattle and use it as a supplementary article of diet in dry season camps. The blood is boiled and taken with porridge as flavouring or is allowed to congulate into a block which is roasted and then cut in slices.

Milk, meat and blood are the food products derived from cattle but the herds also furnish the materials for implements and other necessary articles. Skins are used for sleeping on, for trays, for carrying fuel, making cord for tethering, leather collars for oxen and in making pipes, spears and shields. Tail hairs are used for ornamentation, bones and horns are used for instruments, scrapers and beaters. Cattle dung is used for plastering walls and floors of huts; dried dung is used for fuel and

16: Evans-Pritchard E-S (1931, 1936) 1956
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always or entirely so. *Cwac* means a mistake, an unintentional 776°
error and generally one of no great consequence, one in which a 577
serious breach of religious or moral precepts is not involved, such
as an unintentional lapse in manners or a slip of the tongue. It
implies that the action was incorrect but inadvertent; and the
man asks to be excused. In a certain sense, however, in the sense
that the act was not deliberate, a more serious fault may be re-
garded as a mistake, even though it is at the same time a fault, and
the fact that it was not a deliberate fault is held to some extent to
alter the circumstances. This is very evident in affairs in which
damage and compensation are involved, as, for example, in homi-
cide. When a man kills another, how the damage is treated, both [612]
with regard to manner and to the amount of compensation de-
manded, much depends on whether the slaying was premeditated
or was the unfortunate outcome of a sudden quarrel or an acci-
dent. God also takes deliberation into account in breaches of [604]
moral law. Thus it is not thought that children will fall sick if
they have incestuous relations in their play 'because the children
are ignorant of having done wrong'. They know no better. Like- [336]
wise, if two kinsmen have relations with the same girl, which
Nuer regard as incest, without knowing that the other was making
love to her, 'it is not incest because each was unaware that the
other was making love to her'. Again, it is not thought that a man
who commits incest with a kinswoman, not knowing her to be a
kinswoman, will suffer any serious, or even any, consequences:
'This is not incest because he was unaware of the relationship
between them.' If a man who respects hearts or lungs of animals
eats them not knowing the nature of the meat he eats, 'this is an [262]
accident and his spirit (the spirit *of* hearts or lungs) knows that it
was not done deliberately'. He may get a slight illness, but not a
serious one. When I was living on the Sobat river news came to
our village that some persons in an upstream village had found
some meat and had cooked and eaten it, thinking that it was the
flesh of some animal crocodiles had mutilated, and that they had
later discovered it to be the flesh of a man whom crocodiles had
killed and torn to pieces. I was told that these persons would at
once have taken *wol nuerra*, medicine to cleanse them from pollu-
tion, and that while the happening was very disgusting it was
unlikely that it would cause death because the flesh was eaten in
ignorance of its nature. Nuer say that God may overlook what

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1934) 1956
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[76] [782] was a young bull, the cow of a spirit, and that no good would come of any possessing it. They were not surprised when one night it tore up its enlisting peg and fell into the Sobat river and was drowned. The *Sudan Intelligence Report* of September-October 1934, No. 69, records the interesting case of a man who was ordered by a Government Chiefs' Court to pay a cow in damages to another Nuer. As at the time he possessed only one cow and this was dedicated to a spirit, the Court permitted him to defer payment while he went to obtain a cow owing to him in a different part of the country. During his absence from home on this errand one of the Government chiefs took his cow. The owner was killed by an elephant on his journey and his kinsmen claimed compensation from the chief because they attributed his death to the removal of the cow devoted to his spirit. The milk of a spirit's [761] cow should only be drunk by members of the family. It belongs to the spirit and is therefore reserved for the people to whom it is attached. I was first made aware of this rule when on a journey I fell sick in a Nuer village and was compelled to spend a few days there. Being unable to eat solid food, I asked a lad of the owners homestead if I might have a little milk. He said that he was sorry, but the only cow giving milk in his family herd was the cow of his mother's spirit, and he could not let me have its milk without her permission. He later brought some milk and told me that it would be all right for me to drink it as I was sick, but when I could eat again only the children of the home might either milk the cow or drink its milk.

Should a man neglect to dedicate a cow to his spirit when he is in a position to do so, or should he dispose of a beast already devoted to the spirit and not dedicate another to it, sickness is [753] likely to fall on his family or herd. But although Nuer say this, and believe what they say, it is not uncommon for them to use a spirit's cow for bridewealth or some other purpose, hoping that they will soon be able to replace it. They know that they are doing wrong but they think that maybe the spirit, having been informed of their intentions, will understand their difficulty and will excuse their manner of overcoming it, knowing that they mean to keep their promise to give it another cow as soon as they can. But they may not find it easy to procure another cow for some time and the spirit has in the meantime to go without one; or they keep on putting off the replacement because they want to use

16: Evans-Pritchard E-S (1931, 1936) 1956
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[250] for women must not do so lest he cause the birds to devour the crop.

Plants are respected by some lineages. They may not cut them or burn their wood. The large Gaanwar clan respect the *nyuut*-tree (*Cordia Rothii*) and the *koat*, tamarind, tree. The ancestor of [271] this clan fell from heaven holding a branch of the *nyuut*-tree in his hand or, some say, he descended from heaven by, or on to, a *nyuut* near which was a small tamarind.[1] Members of this clan call for aid on *kwoth nyuut* or *kwoth koat*, the spirit of these trees. The *nyuut*, a branch of which is often erected in the homes of [272] Gaanwar as a shrine to this spirit, is associated with rain on account of the humidity of its leaves even in the dry season. The verbal form of the word, *nyut*, means 'to drizzle'. Members of the [273] clan may therefore be called on to bring rain in time of drought. This they do by placing a sprig of the tree in water, sacrificing an animal, and calling on the spirit of the clan, which is the spirit of the tree, for rain. It is, we may suppose, on account of their connexion with water that the clan have as additional totems the waterbuck and the fish *nyimur*, *cur*, *lam*, *yiou*, and *guorjual* and can also speak of their spirit as '*kwoth puoorè*', 'spirit of our waterbuck', '*kwoth lamudè*', 'spirit of our *lam* fish', and so on. I [262] have been told that women of this clan will not eat the meat of a cow which has died calving, but I do not know the reason for this abstention. The scattered Jwai clan share some of the Gaanwar totems. They seem at one time to have formed a single clan with the Gaanwar. The Jingop and Kounyang lineages of western Nuerland respect the *ngop* tree, the sycamore or wild fig (*Ficus Sycomorus*), and speak of '*kwoth ngoppuu*', 'spirit of our fig-tree', to which they dedicate cows in their kraals, as is usual where there is a totemic relationship. The largest clan in Nuerland, the Gaatgunkir of the Jikany tribes, respect gourds. Their ancestor was [273] found in a gourd (*kur*). They will not cut or step over the stems of gourds or prepare them to serve as utensils, for they must not handle a gourd which still contains its pulp and seed. Nevertheless they use them as utensils for the same purposes as do other Nuer. The clan is of Dinka origin, though it now counts as a Nuer clan. Other plants respected by lineages, usually of Dinka descent,

[1] Some variants of the story of his appearance on earth are recorded in *The Nuer*, p. 230.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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776 614 clan bear an ox-hide his next child might be born without teeth in the gums of the upper jaw as a cow is without upper incisors. A further observance said to obtain in the clan is that their women may not cross a marshy shallow without first kicking some water out of it. People say that the Jikul are *jikwoth*, God's [521] people, in that they are an augury in war, for if a man on the side they are supporting in a fight should be the first to be wounded their party knows that it will be defeated and should retire, whereas if a man of the other side is the first to be wounded they know by this that they will be victorious and should press forward. [522] When a girl of the clan is married a cow of her bridewealth goes to the hide-spirit, and if she is later divorced this cow remains with [523] her parents as indemnity for the hides the people sat on during the marriage negotiations. Mr. B. A. Lewis tells me that when he suggested holding a dance in a village mostly occupied by a Jikul lineage in the Lak tribe he was asked to make a present to the chief man of the community in compensation for the beating of the tympanum of the drum.

776 614 773 The Jikoi clan respect rafters (*kol*) and rope used in the building of byres and huts. They use them for building but they will not use those of an old habitation for fuel. It is related that in ancient times men of this clan tried to build a byre which would reach to the clouds. Other people said that this could not be done because the clouds were far away, and there was much argument on the matter during the building. God in the sky heard the argument and was angered at the presumption of those who wanted to build a byre to reach the heavens, and he sent down lightning and destroyed the builders.

776 177 262 I have mentioned all Nuer totems of which I have certain knowledge and I now say a few words about totemistic relationships before discussing some of the chief features of Nuer totemism and its significance for an understanding of their conception of Spirit. In Nuerland one often finds that individuals respect classes of things not respected by other members of their lineages or even by their close kin. There are people, probably all or mostly of Dinka origin, who refrain from eating certain parts of beasts: entrails, heart, liver, kidneys, spleen, head, and hooves. In those few cases I have inquired into, the association was said to have come about through a misfortune connected with the parts abstained from. For example, people who abstain from eating hearts

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for example, people are said to respect hearts
are, at any rate often, those who have had some heart trouble and 776*
have been cured by massage by a man who respects hearts. They 177
now respect hearts themselves and can cure others. Again, a man 262
told me that he would not eat liver because a forebear had burnt 755
himself when roasting liver and had died of the burns. I was told, and it is highly probable, that these abstentions do not last for more than a generation or two. In the same way some people—here again they are said to be Dinka or of Dinka descent—respect certain diseases, or rather their symptoms. These are people who have suffered from the diseases, have been cured by others who respect them, and can now treat sufferers in their turn. I believe that usually, if not invariably, this is a relationship between an individual and a disease and that the respect is not shared by his kinsmen or descendants. Among the diseases recorded by Miss Soule[1] or myself which people respect are *kerker*, a yaws condition, *weth*, also a yaws infection of some kind, *riewy*, convulsions in infants, *guenq*, an abscess, *tanglok*, tubercular abscess, *lili*, hipjoint disease, *kor*, myalgia of the lumbar region (p. 185), and *thiaeng*, dysentery (pp. 187–8). I discuss later totemistic relationships of individuals to totems of female forebears.

II

It is essential to an understanding of Nuer totemism that it 776*
should be appreciated that Nuer respect the natural species or class of objects because they regard them as being in some manner emblems or representations of Spirit. A European observer may easily be led astray by a Nuer speaking of his totem, as he ordinarily does, as his *kwoth*, but he means no more by this than that the totem in some special way belongs to a spirit which also makes itself known to him concretely in that species. Doubtless, as the spirit is only known in and through the species, spirit and species can never be wholly dissociated, but Nuer quite explicitly distinguish between them. Those who respect species say that it is the spirits of their totems and not the creatures themselves that they call on for aid, that they sacrifice to, and that they dedicate beasts to; and when we speak about the spirit of a totem it must be understood that what is meant is the spirit for which the totem

[1] *Some Nuer Terms in Relation to the Human Body*, a pamphlet published by the American Mission, Nasser, 1931.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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SPIRITS OF THE BELOW

Can any conclusions be reached about the nature of the things which are objects of respect? The totemism of any people involves the selection of certain natural objects to the exclusion of others. Nuer totems are certainly an odd assortment: lion, waterbuck, monitor lizard, crocodile, various snakes, tortoise, ostrich, cattle egret, durra-birds, various trees, papyrus, gourd, various fish, bee, red ant, river and stream, cattle with certain markings, monorchids, hide, rafter, and rope; and, if we were to include totemistic objects, parts of beasts and some diseases. Taking them as a whole we may say that there is no marked utilitarian element in their selection. The animals and birds and fish and plants and artifacts which are of most use to Nuer are absent from the list of their totems. The facts of Nuer totemism do not, therefore, support the contention of those who see in totemism chiefly, or even merely, a ritualization of empirical interests.[1] Nor in general are Nuer totems such creatures as might be expected, on account of some striking peculiarities, to attract particular attention. On the contrary, those creatures which have excited the mythopoeic imagination of the Nuer and which figure most prominently in their folk-tales do not figure, or figure rarely and insignificantly, among their totems.

It is too broad a question to ask why animals, birds, reptiles, and trees should have become symbols for Nuer of the relation of Spirit to lineages. Any answer would have to be in very general terms because they have been common religious symbols among many different people at many different times. We may, however, note that most, though not all, Nuer totems are in a general way highly regarded by all Nuer, and not only by those who respect them, on account of religious associations of one kind or another which have nothing to do with totemism as such. Thus all Nuer have friendly feelings towards all birds and do not harm them because they are—some more than others—symbols of Spirit and loved by God, though Nuer may also be influenced in this matter by their belief that twins are birds, so that all twins respect all birds. Ernst Marno noted nearly a century ago that Nuer will not eat birds[2] and Mr. Jackson, speaking of this avoidance, remarks

[1] e.g. B. Malinowski, *Science, Religion and Reality*, 1926, pp. 24 and 43 seq.; A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Fourth Pacific Science Congress*, vol. iii, 1929, pp. 295–309. Emile Durkheim protested against such interpretations (*Sociology and Philosophy*, Eng. trans. by D. Pocock, 1954, p. 86).

[2] Ernst Marno, *Reisen im Gebiete des Blauen und Weissen Nil*, 1874, p. 349.

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perceive the form of a hippopotamus in what we would have regarded merely as a monstrosity, and it enables us to understand better why, since the past is justified in the present, they do not reject as beyond the bounds of possibility the stories of their ancestors having been born twins to animals.

The story I have related introduces us to another way in which Nuer think that a totem might enter a family and perhaps in certain circumstances become a totem of its descendants, though I have no evidence of a totemic relationship actually being established in this way. The hippopotamuses caused the child to resemble (*cal*) themselves. I was told that similarly a man who has killed several elephants might beget a child with crooked mouth and nose and thick legs. The whole race of sheep is said to have been acted on in this manner by the *koat*-tree, because they make a habit of eating its shoots. When a lamb is born its legs are doubled up like the roots of the tree. Women refrain from eating the *bulyak* or puff-fish, a remarkable creature which when irritated inflates itself like a balloon, because by doing so they might cause their children to be born with abnormally distended bellies. When Nuer see a fish-eagle swoop on to the water and carry away a fish in its claws they sometimes run after it shouting, to cause it to drop its prey, but should a pregnant woman eat a fish dropped by an eagle her child might be born with deformed arms resembling the wings of the eagle or with twisted feet resembling its claws. If parents who respect tortoises pass a tortoise without some gesture of recognition their child may be born with tiny eyes like those of a tortoise. Other examples of a foetus being stamped with the likeness of a totem have been cited earlier in reference to some similar human fault in behaviour towards the totem and this would seem to be regarded as the most usual cause of an abnormality of this kind, though Nuer think that a new totemic relationship might start in the same way. I think, both because in most cases it is in an established totemic relationship that a creature is said to stamp its likeness on a foetus and also because it is more in accordance with Nuer ideas about Spirit and also about animals, that we would certainly be right to say that when Nuer speak of creatures acting in this way they are thinking of Spirit doing so in the guise of the creatures. The very fact of the abnormality is evidence of the action of Spirit. Consequently, should a man on account of such an event in his family respect a

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that the unity of twins is expressed, particularly in ceremonies connected with marriage and death, in which the personality undergoes a change. Thus, when the senior of male twins marries, the junior acts with him in the ritual acts he has to perform; female twins ought to be married on the same day; and no mortuary ceremonies are held for twins because, for one reason, one of them cannot be cut off from the living without the other. A woman whose twin brother had died some time before said to Miss Soule, to whom I am indebted for the information, 'Is not his soul still living? I am alive, and we are really children of God.'

There is no mortuary ceremony even when the second twin dies, and I was told that twins do not attend the mortuary ceremonies held for their dead kinsfolk, nor mourn them, because a twin is a *ran nhial*, a person of the sky or of the above. He is also spoken of as *gat kwoth*, a child of God. These dioscuric descriptions of twins are common to many peoples, but the Nuer are peculiar in holding also that they are birds. They say 'a twin is not a person (*ran*), he is a bird (*dit*)', although, as we have just seen, they assert, in another sense, that twins are one person (*ran*). Here they are using the word *ran* in the sense of a human being as distinct from any other creature. The dogma is expressed in various ways. Very often a twin is given the proper name *Dit*, bird, *Gwong*, guineafowl, or *Ngec*, francolin.[1] All Nuer consider it shameful, at any rate for adults, to eat any sort of bird or its eggs, but were a twin to do this it would be much more than shameful. It would be *nueer*, a grave sin, for twins respect (*thek*) birds, because, Nuer say, birds are also twins, and they avoid any sort of contact with them. The equivalence of twins and birds is expressed particularly in connexion with death. When an infant twin dies people say *'ce par'*, 'he has flown away', using the word denoting the flight of birds. Infant twins who die, as so often happens, are not buried, as other infants are, but are covered in

[1] That the names, at least all those I have heard, are taken from birds lowest in the scale of Nuer reckoning requires comment, especially in view of the argument I later develop. It may be due to the Nuer habit of speaking of their relation to God—the birth of twins constitutes such a context—by comparing themselves with lowly things. On the other hand, it may be simply in keeping with the logic of the analogy. Twins belong to the class of the above but are below; just as guineafowl and francolin belong to the class of birds, which as a class is in the category of the above, but are almost earthbound.

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a reed basket or winnowing-tray and placed in the fork of a tree, because birds rest in trees. I was told that birds which feed on carrion would not molest the bodies but would look at their dead kinsmen—twins and birds are also said to be kin, though the usage may be regarded as metaphorical—and fly away again. When I asked a Nuer whether adult twins would be buried like other people he replied 'no, of course not, they are birds and their souls go up into the air'. A platform, not used in the normal mode of burial, is erected in the grave and a hide placed over it. The body is laid on this hide and covered with a second hide. Earth is then carefully patted over the upper hide instead of being shovelled in quickly, as in the burial of an ordinary person. I was told that the corpse is covered with earth lest a hyena eat it and afterwards drink at a pool, for men might drink at the same pool and die from contamination (*nueer*).

It is understandable that Nuer draw an analogy between the multiple hatching of eggs and the dual birth of twins. The analogy is explicit, and, through an extension of it, the flesh of crocodiles and turtles is also forbidden to twins on the ground that these creatures too, like birds, lay eggs. Miss Soule once had a girl twin in her household who refused fish for the same reason—the only case of its kind known to either of us. But the analogy between multiple births in birds and men does not adequately explain why it is with birds that human twins are equated when there are many other creatures which habitually bear several young at the same time and in a manner more closely resembling human parturition. It cannot be just multiple birth which leads Nuer to say that twins are birds, for these other creatures are not respected by twins on that account. The prohibition on eating eggs is clearly secondary, and it is extended to include crocodiles and turtles—and by Miss Soule's girl fish also—not because they lay eggs but because their laying eggs makes them like birds. Moreover, it is difficult to understand why a resemblance of the kind should in any case be made so much of. The multiple hatching of chicks is doubtless a resemblance which greatly strengthens the idea of twins being birds, but it is only part of a more complex analogical representation which requires to be explained in more general terms of Nuer religious thought. A twin, on account of his peculiar manner of conception is, though not Spirit himself, a special creation, and, therefore, manifestation of Spirit; and when he dies his

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196 784 Nuer speak of these conventions with regard to nakedness and eating as *theak ma tot*, minor respect. That they do not think of them as faults of the same order as breaches of the other rules of respect—*theak ma dit*, major respect—is also shown by the fact that though all the rules are alike referred to as *thek* they do not speak of a breach of either the nakedness or the food convention as *nueer*,[1] the word, the verbal form of which is *nuer*, which they use when speaking of breaches of some of the other rules and the consequences of them. We have earlier met the word in reference to eating human flesh (p. 19) and to drinking from a pool contaminated by a corpse (p. 130). A breach of the more serious rules of *thek* is likely to cause death to the breakers or their children or cattle, especially if the breach was wilful. I was told that *nueer* is [753] a sickness of the whole body which generally begins with violent vomiting, but probably any serious sickness following the breach of a *thek* taboo would be described as *nueer*. Sometimes the offender's life can be saved by timely action, and his recovery is thought to be likely if his offence was unintentional. Sacrifice is made to God and in certain circumstances an infusion of cleansing medicines may also be drunk.

196 784 577 262 The attitude Nuer call *thek* is thus different from mere avoidance of doing things considered to be unbecoming. Failure to conform to *thek* prohibitions involves the culprit in something more than *puc*, shame, and its counterpart *cany*, a word which has the general sense of 'to despise'. Any conspicuous breach of morality or decorum is shameful in Nuer eyes, as when a man steals or is rude to his father. It is shameful—to give another example—for a man, especially if he is unmarried and is courting girls, to eat birds or eggs. Only a *bar*, a poor man without cattle, would eat them. I was frequently taunted by Nuer on this score: 'are you not a man that you eat such little things?' Nuer also regard the eating of most wild fruits as contemptible and they think it both disgusting and shameful to eat carnivora, monkeys, zebras, most reptiles, and all insects. The breach of a *thek* rule may be shameful and despicable, but when it is spoken of as *nueer* it is also sinful.

196 784 783 There are, as will be seen, prohibitions with religious sanctions

[1] It should perhaps be made clear that the word *nueer* has nothing to do with 'Nuer', the name of the people. 'Nuer' is not the name by which the people refer to themselves but is what foreigners call them.

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231 782 784 seeing that an injustice has been done. The man had no right to take the life of the ox and by doing so he committed a fault. In sacrificial invocations Nuer explain to God why the life of the ox is being taken, and they may also address the ox and tell it why it is being killed—not that they think it understands. They are justifying themselves in taking its life.

231 731 782 Consequently I was not surprised to learn from Dr. Mary Smith, whom I asked to inquire into the question, that when cattle are killed in time of famine Nuer, though they do not consecrate the beasts, may make an invocation over them asking God that 'the meat may be soft in their stomachs and not bring them sickness'. This does not constitute sacrifice, there being no sacrificial intention, but it shows that there is a feeling of guilt about killing animals for food even when hunger compels it, and we can say that all cattle, and also sheep and goats, are reserved, or set apart, for sacrifice and their lives should not be taken, except in the special circumstances I have mentioned, for any other purpose. In that sense we may speak of cattle as being 'sacred'. If we do so, however, we must note that they are not sacrificed because they are regarded as sacred intrinsically, or for reasons extraneous to the sacrificial situation, but, on the contrary, they are regarded as sacred only because they are reserved for sacrifice and in the sense defined by that purpose. I have discussed beasts of the herd only and not those of the flock because, as we have noted earlier, in sacrifices they are 'cattle', surrogates for oxen. It is pre-eminently their role to play the victim's part in sacrifice and they are consequently also reserved for sacrifice, but the sacrificial equivalence is always between *ran* and *yang*, man and 'cow', never between man and sheep or goat, for even when it is a sheep or goat which is being killed the ideal equivalence is preserved in speech.

231 ● [262] 224 In order that the sacrificial killing of beasts of the flocks and herds may be seen in a wider setting both of the taking of lives of creatures and of the eating of flesh, it should be realized that, except for fish, Nuer seldom kill wild creatures but rely almost entirely on the flesh of their domesticated animals for meat. For religious reasons they are averse to killing birds, except occasionally the ostrich, to which the same symbolism does not attach, for its feathers; and also reptiles, except the turtle and the crocodile (perhaps occasionally the monitor lizard). But even where there is no objection to killing animals, as in the case of mammals, Nuer